

Benton Foundation  
1250 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

July 5, 2011

NOTICE OF EX PARTE

Ms. Marlene Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th St. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**Re: Connect America Fund - WC Docket No. 10-90**  
**A National Broadband Plan for Our Future – GN Docket No. 09-51**  
**High-Cost Universal Service Support – WC Docket No. 05-337**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Benton Foundation<sup>1</sup> respectfully writes in support of the comments submitted in this proceeding by the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition to enhance the broadband capabilities of community anchor institutions in rural areas.

The Benton Foundation works to ensure that media and telecommunications serve the public interest and enhance our democracy. We pursue this mission by seeking policy solutions that support the values of access, diversity and equity, and by demonstrating the value of media and telecommunications for improving the quality of life for all. Connecting rural areas to broadband in an affordable manner that also takes into account other barriers to adoption has been a priority of our foundation.

The current proceeding to reform the High-Cost Fund and to create a new Connect America Fund (CAF) focused on broadband deployment in rural areas provides an important opportunity for the FCC to ensure that anchor institutions are able to serve the needs of their rural populations. We believe the need to provide ubiquitous access to broadband is of paramount importance and the Commission should take care to ensure that broadband reach communities in a manner that spurs adoption. We understand and agree with the desire to build broadband

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<sup>1</sup> [www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org), Benton Foundation public filings, including but not limited to these reply comments, represent the institutional view of the Foundation as opposed to the views of any individual officer or director.

networks to residential consumers in rural areas; however, we respectfully suggest that the needs of community anchor institutions are just as important. Community anchor institutions provide essential services to rural areas, such as education, healthcare, and job training and require higher-capacity broadband services. Keeping these needs in mind as the Commission refines the CAF would allow for the disbursement of funds towards an infrastructure that is both efficiently providing coverage for unserved consumers and also enhancing the capabilities of the anchor institutions serving them.

The National Broadband Plan established as a national goal that “every American community should have affordable access to at least 1 gigabit per second broadband service to anchor institutions. . .” By requiring those companies who receive financial support to build rural broadband networks for homes to also provide affordable, high-capacity broadband to their anchor institutions, the FCC will go a long way toward achieving this important goal.

Sincerely,

/s/

Charles Benton, Chairman  
The Benton Foundation